

June 2005

No Workshop In July

Because of the July 4 holiday, the ISS is taking a break next month. The newsletter will resume publication in August and the next workshop is August 1.

Tedeschi in Charge

ISS member **Tony Tedeschi** is hosting the weekly Tuesday open mic at the Sea Cliff Coffee Co. in Sea Cliff. Sign up at 7 p.m.

Tuning In Online

ISS member **Rich O'Brien's** radio webcast is still going strong with live performances and recorded songs. Check it out at www.robrien.net/

Riverhead Blues Fest
The Defibrillators and **Little Toby Walker** will play at the annual festival, scheduled for July 8 to 10. More at <http://www.riverhead-bluesfestival.com/>

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www.islandsongwriters.org

STONY BROOK

First Biannual Members Concert a Success

By Pedro Pereira

Nine ISS member acts and one very special guest took the stage at the University Café in SUNY Stony Brook last month for the organization's first biannual members concert.

ISS Director **Sonny Speed** said he was quite pleased with the outcome.

"I consider it a big success since we had at one point 73 people in the room, which is 70 more than any other night I was there," Sonny said. "No one complained about anything, except for a few comments on the sound hum early on."

The gig kicked off about 45 minutes behind schedule and didn't wrap up until about 2 a.m. Sonny attributed the delay to sound checks that ran a little long.

Kicking off the performances was **Bob Campbell**, who served up a three-song menu of his politically charged compositions, including "Lady in the Harbor." Accompanying himself with his trusty Martin and harmonica, Bob sounded great.

Next up was me, your friendly newsletter editor, and at the risk of sounding a bit immodest, I feel I delivered a solid performance. I played a couple of my recently penned numbers, "Lay Down Your Sword" and "Wisdom of Stones," and topped it off with my Portuguese-language number, "Saudade."

Sarah Haddock followed me on stage and, accompanied by her electric piano, delivered a wonderful set with her musically catchy and lyrically clever songs. Sarah was in great voice and looked quite confident, eliciting a strong reaction from the crowd.

One of the night's highlights followed, when international blues star **Little Toby Walker** took the stage. Toby's performance, as usual was entertaining and his guitar playing was stellar. Toby is a gifted player who, despite his amazing skill on the fretboard, never lets his enormous playing talent go untamed. Instead, he skillfully uses his guitar-playing talents to serve the song.

ISS newcomer **Jim Caputo** then delivered a compelling set, interspersing his musical numbers with a bit of standup comedy. Who knew the guy is so multi-talented? Jim has thought-provoking lyrics and a delicate guitar-playing style to which people really respond.

Sonny Speed's new band, **Tornado Alley**, was another highlighted. Fronted by the dynamic trio of Sonny and ISS members **Tim Huss** and **Vinny Crici**, the band was kept on track by percussionist **Robert Langley** of **Defibrillators** fame. With alternating lead vocals between Tim, Sonny and Vinny, Tornado Alley kicked up the dust with its tremendously entertaining set of Americana fare.

Sonny Meadows hit the stage with his new band, which also includes Langley and Defibrillators members **Bob Westcott** and **Dr. Max Foreman**. Sonny did vocals and rhythm guitar duty, playing a handful of his wonderfully witty political songs and the poignant "Hanging in the High School Hall."

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Music for Film Seminar

SOUNDTRACK SONGS EQUAL BIG PAYOFF

Writer's Choice

By Walter Sargent

The May meeting packed the house and once again we had a lot of winners. We ran out of ballots early, so members wrote on lyric sheets and \$5 bills (the latter getting special consideration as per ISS policy).

Top honors went to **Sonny Meadows**, whose "Devil Is On The Throne" won over considerable support for last month's winner **Steve Robynson** ("Honeysuckle Breeze").

Steve Robynson is now officially "Little Stevie Wonder Smokey Robynson" for his killer vocal delivery. Thank you, anonymous ISS nicknaming committee.

Runners-up were **Bill DeZego Jr.** ("Save Me"), **Bill DeZego Sr.** ("Our Love") **Conrad Tyras** ("Coney Island," beach mix) and **Tim Huss** ("California"). One advantage of a packed house is that there are a lot more votes to go round.

Yet again, the undecideds had their say by casting ties, submitting blanks, poems, doodles and making polite but firm recommendations for a runoff voting policy. All I

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By Walter Sargent

I recently attended an all-day seminar in midtown Manhattan with two other ISS members, Rich Stein and Dave Cook, on making music for films. Every music business seminar I've ever been to has exceeded expectations and the Music for Film Seminar, hosted by Mark Northham from Film Music World, was no exception. It was fun, informative and inspiring.

The place was packed, standing room only. We had one agent, a few producers, a handful of songwriters, and easily more than two dozen composers, all of them "serious." You can tell. When we did the introductions, I have to admit, I felt like a second-class citizen for being a mere songwriter amongst all those serious musicians. As it turned out, that feeling would be short-lived.

It was at this precise moment that I began to feel like quite the genius for being a songwriter. Of course, I did my best to conceal this revelation hoping the others would suspect that I had known it all along.

The first thing we learned was that a degree in film scoring is absolutely worthless for getting work. "Does anyone in the audience have a degree in film scoring," Mark asked. Yes, we had at least one person with a Master's Degree in Film Scoring — from Berkeley, no less. While it turns out that no one in the business has an actual music degree, having one is probably a liability, which I'll never understand. The business is still extremely competitive. Look around.

In addition, the performance royalties for film scores are a fraction of that for songs *and*, to add insult to injury, the burden of production schedules and deliverables is far greater for composers than for songwriters. Songwriters really have it both ways.

It was at this precise moment that I began to feel like quite the genius for being a songwriter. Of course, I did my best to conceal this revelation hoping the others would suspect that I had known it all along. We songwriters, you see, are no dummies.

The world may be going to hell in the proverbial handbasket, but at least it is willing to pay handsomely for soundtrack songs. Pre-order your copies of the "End of Civilization As We Know It" on DVD today. Shortages are expected shortly afterwards.

But enough inspiration. Let us turn now to the meat and potatoes of the seminar: selling your work and, perchance, making a living. Mr. Northham did an excellent job of showing us the right and wrong ways to go about it.

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SOUNDTRACKS EQUAL BIG PAY

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He called on volunteers for role-playing The Interview, reinforcing the key points: confidence, professionalism, body language and the techniques used on both sides of the negotiation. Incidentally, I consider volunteering for role-playing when you have no idea what is going to happen the penultimate act of self-sacrifice. My hat is off to those martyrs for The Cause.

The first key point was the cultivating of the relationship, also known as "schmoozing." Like any business, people like to do business with people they know and like. "Invite music directors to lunch," I scribbled in the margin. In California, where Mark is from, this is routine. In New York, where Walter is from, this will take some getting used to.

I learned once and for all there is no such thing as a demo anymore. Demos should be finished product. End of story. Once you have your finished masterpiece, targeting the right material to the right occasion is essential. It does not matter how great your megapop superhit is, if the music director wants a country ballad, do not send in anything but country ballads. Do not send in two stunning country ballads and one power pop ballad to show how versatile you are! It will only show how amateur you are and, worse, it allows "the composers" to return to their natural state of smugness.

During our lunch break, we formed an impromptu band of six and repaired to the barbeque luncheonette down the street. One of them, a music teacher from Levittown, was particularly enthusiastic about an online course he had taken at MusicForTheMedia.com. Not that I am recommending moving into film-composer land, but it is worth making a note of it.

Apart from that, the conversation centered mostly on something called a "Giga Studio", which I imagine is like the mothership of digital audio workstations. Great. Like a 6-year old, now I want one too.

Back at the seminar, we tried to make a dent in the hefty handout, but alas, it was too hefty. We learned the historical reasons for why royalties are so unfair to composers. Being smug, it turns out, is, like, totally bad karma. Mark shared his thoughts on where the intellectual property rights business might be headed on account of that wondrous, infernal contraption called the Internet.

We learned that the film industry is nothing, absolutely nothing compared to the video game industry. It is a fraction of a drop in the bucket, but that is another seminar. One I hope to attend.

First Biannual Concert a Success

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ISS Webmaster **Walter Sargent** also delivered a solid performance, accompanying himself with his Tacoma guitar. Walter's songs are compelling lyrically and, musically, they have a timeless sound that borrows from the popular rhythms of at least the last five of six decades.

By the time I left the venue around midnight, two more bands had yet to take the stage, newsletter founder **Gerry Dantone's Universal Dice** and **Rusty Lugs**, which includes ISS members **John Graybosch** and **Andy Martinez**.

"Universal Dice were excellent, and had a good, strong set," said Sonny Speed.

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Who Played What

Here's the list of songwriters and songs from last month's ISS workshop:

Steve Robinson

Honeysuckle Breeze

Fred Bredfrj

Marcia (The Message I Left on Her Machine)"

John Graybosch

Try, Try, Try

Frank Gambino

When Two Become One

Bill DeZego

Our Love

Bill DeZego Jr.

Save Me

Tim Huss

California

Conrad Tyras

Coney Island

Bob Campbell

Stand Up for Your Rights

Pedro Pereira

Anxiety No. 3

Estelle Henrich

559 W. 22nd Street

Sonny Meadows

The Devil is on the Throne

Mark Hussey

King of Puns

Steve Lieberman

Caftor'a



What's Doin'

ISS members are always out and about. Check your local listings for appearances live, on the radio or even on TV. Go to www.islandsongwriters.org for gigs and links to member sites with information about CD releases, shows and MP3s. Here's what's happening in the coming weeks. (*Check with the venue first because dates and times may change.*)

ISS Workshop

Test out your songs in front of fellow musicians, who provide constructive feedback. The workshop is on the first day of each month at **Five Towns College, Burrs Lane**, Dix Hills. Run by ISS Director **Sonny Speed**, It starts at 7:30 p.m. Bring a guitar to perform your song live, or you may choose to play a CD or tape. A piano is available for keyboardists. Be sure to bring 25 copies of your lyrics so other workshops attendees can follow along and provide feedback.

Next workshop: August 1

No workshop in July

Stony Brook Concert a Success

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"Everyone played well and Gerry carried the vocals well. The Rusty Lugs were entertaining with very good material. The drummer had an outstanding voice, and Andy was killer on lead guitar and not bad on vocals either."

A second members concert is planned for Oct. 19, Sonny said.

"I will change a few things for the next show: earlier sound checks, fewer acts with longer sets. I think three bands and five soloists will work better," he said.

Writer's Choice

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know is that the last time we had a recount, things got ugly.

Sonny's 'Devil' may be the capstone of a body of work he's been developing for some time. It was scary good, and a tough act for anyone to follow. To those who came late or left early, you missed a lot.

Open Mics

Borders, Jericho Turnpike, Syosset, hosted by Bill Ryan or Vincent Crici, first Thursday of the month. Sign-up at 7:30 p.m. *Next gig: July 7*

The Cooke's In, Huntington, 7:30 p.m. Thursdays

Pisces Cafe, Railroad Ave, Babylon, 8 p.m. Wednesdays

Sea Cliff Coffee Co., hosted by Tony Tedeschi, Sea Cliff, 7 p.m. Tuesdays

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